



## City of Gaithersburg Press Release

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### For Immediate Release

## Innovative, Sustainable Green Practices Recognized with Gaithersburg Environmental Awards

**Gaithersburg, MD (April 3, 2019)** As part of Green Month, the City of Gaithersburg presented Environmental Awards to individuals and organizations demonstrating outstanding environmental stewardship in the Gaithersburg community, with the goal of inspiring others to pursue similar efforts. The awards were presented by Mayor Jud Ashman and members of the City Council at a ceremony at City Hall on Monday, April 1, 2019. A proclamation designating April 2019 as Green Month and May 3 as Arbor in Day in the City of Gaithersburg was presented to Environmental Affairs Committee Chair Doug Wolf during the Mayor and City Meeting following the awards ceremony.

Green Month activities include an Environmental Film Night featuring a free screening of the documentary [Potomac: The River Runs Through Us](#) at 7:30 p.m. on Sunday, April 7 at the Gaithersburg Arts Barn, Community Green Up Day on Saturday, April 13 from 9 a.m. to noon, Make a Difference Day on Thursday, April 25, and [Montgomery County GreenFest](#) on Sunday, April 28 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Brookside Gardens. Explore Green Month activities [here](#).

For this year's Environmental Awards, the City's Environmental Affairs Committee selected 12 achievement winners and one certificate of appreciation recipient, including businesses and nonprofit and faith-based organizations. Collectively, the winners are growing our local green economy, improving their business models with sustainable initiatives, working within their neighborhoods, and inspiring a new green generation.

### *Achievement Award Winners:*

**Karl Van Neste** was recognized for installing a trail monitor to count the number of people and animals using local trails, spurred by an interest in trail use in local parks. He received approval from the City to install equipment in Muddy Branch and Malcolm King Parks and along the Muddy Branch Greenway trail in the County. With funding from the Muddy Branch Alliance and the help of interns and volunteers, Van Neste has been evaluating the use of natural surface and paved trails, identifying trends. He plans to present the results to the City.

Kolya Braun-Greiner and Anna Awimbo of **Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake** were recognized for coordinating several interfaith events in the City in 2018, including an interfaith walk in Malcolm King Park, an engagement session at Epworth United Methodist Church that featured on-site projects, and a grant application session at St. Rosa of Lima Church. The projects engaged multiple faith groups, including Sikh, Christian and Jewish congregations. The sessions explored the common interest in creation and stewardship of all faiths. They also encouraged groups such as the Muddy Branch Alliance and Seneca Creek Watershed Partners to engage with these congregations and develop initiatives that lead to common environmental benefits.

Board members of the **Seneca Creek Watershed Partners**, including Ann Smith and Debbie Sarabia, were recognized for organizing clean-ups last year with Asbury Methodist Village and Whetstone Run and also in Kelley Park. They also organized informational walks in the City and County to promote health in the Seneca Creek watershed. They are currently working on an initiative to involve people in clean water through the use of art. Board members are active supporters of water monitoring in Ten Mile Creek, improvements to the Seneca Creek Greenway trail and ongoing activities at Seneca Creek State Park.

In 2018, the Lands Green Waters Clean program was transferred from the **Izaak Walton League** to the **Muddy Branch Alliance**, acknowledging the Alliance's support of local water quality efforts. The program was the result of several Chesapeake Bay Trust funding initiatives to engage homeowners in implementing water-friendly projects on their properties. Since the kickoff, Muddy Branch Alliance Program Manager Lauren Hubbard has successfully led several grant applications to assess properties in the Muddy Branch and Seneca Creek watersheds and implement projects that provide substantial water quality benefits. In the spring, the group led a tour of households, HOA common areas, the Izaak Walton League headquarters and several places of worship to showcase projects that can be replicated.

**Woodland Hills Homeowners Association** was recognized for its tree stewardship program and other programs that reduce erosion, promote conservation landscaping with native plantings, control invasive species, and educate homeowners about the sensitivity of the wooded areas. In 2018, Woodland Hills was one of the stops on the Lands Green Waters Clean Butterfly and Bay-Friendly Garden Tour. With the City's Neighborhood Matching Grant program, Woodland Hills planted more than 750 perennials, 27 shrubs and 19 trees in its common areas, removed invasive species, and cut vines at tree bases. The community hosted its seventh Wildlife Habitat group event, handing out native plants and providing information to residents about gardening, the Great Seneca Watershed, and Woodland Hills. The community was also recognized by the National Wildlife Federation for its community wildlife habitat.

**Shaare Torah** was recognized for its stewardship of the environment. As part of Earth Month 2018, more than 50 volunteers from Shaare Torah's Green Group partnered with the City of Gaithersburg and the Muddy Branch Alliance to plant 40 trees and shrubs along a portion of the Muddy Branch Trail impacted by the emerald ash borer. This insect inflicts a nearly 100% mortality rate of ash trees. The planting replaces trees with new ones in one of the most devastated areas.

**Justin Kuan** was recognized with an Individual Achievement Award and **Boy Scout Troop 291** was recognized with a Certificate of Appreciation. Kuan's Eagle Scout project, performed with the help of Boy Scout Troop 291, connected the communities of Washingtonian Woods and the Woods at Muddy Branch to the Muddy Branch Trail in the Lakelands area. The connector trail required a new stream crossing, accomplished by placing rocks in the stream. Environmental approval from the City of Gaithersburg and the State of Maryland was required to create the crossing, develop and install new signage, and find and transport 20 large rocks from a farm in the Agricultural Reserve. The project was coordinated with Katie Lucas of the Muddy Branch Alliance and staff from the City of Gaithersburg. The trail benefits those who enjoy the beauty along the Muddy Branch stream,

and the new connection provides hikers and bikers access to this trail, which extends from Muddy Branch Road all the way to the Potomac River.

### *Businesses and Organizations*

**Fitzgerald Auto Malls** received its 13th annual environmental award. In 2018, Fitzgerald Auto Mall of Gaithersburg attained an 80% recycle rate at its Hyundai and Subaru location and an 85.4% recycling rate at its Toyota Parts and Service facility. Fitzgerald also added a five-level parking garage at the Hyundai and Subaru location, the entire roof of which is covered with solar panels. These panels are projected to provide 60 to 80 percent of the electrical needs of the garage, new car showrooms, accounting offices, and service and repair, and parts departments. Fitzgerald added wiper blades and coffee capsules to its recycling program in 2018; 240 pounds of coffee capsules have been recycled. The recycling program continues to collect wire harnesses, brake lathe shavings, waste oil, used oil filters, antifreeze, scrap metal, scrap tires, batteries, bumper covers, bulk plastic, toner cartridges, paint thinner, and wood pallets.

**AstraZeneca** was recognized for its 10-year Sustainability Strategy for protection of Natural Resources. Two solar arrays were installed with 211 kWh Solar PV Carports and the irrigation system was optimized, reducing 30% of the water needs. In addition, AstraZeneca is currently piloting a program to reduce 80% of the water needs in its cooling towers. Also, its composting program has been expanded to three additional buildings, working towards the goal of offering compost in every room on the campus and becoming a Zero Waste Campus. A Green Team continues to work to engage employees and coordinate events.

### *Achievement Awards in Memorium*

**John Stokke** and **John Hudson** were posthumously recognized with Fallen Heroes/Fallen Oaks Awards. Each of them had a long history of environmental work in Gaithersburg. Stokke was recognized previously by the County for his work picking up trash in Malcolm King Park, and the last several years he also received recognition from the City of Gaithersburg. His work was recently highlighted in a WUSA Channel 9 report on his life work. Hudson was a member of the Environmental Affairs Committee and had a long career as a teacher and mentor for students in the City. He was passionate about the environment, was one of the adopters of the Lands Green Waters Clean initiative, and his yard was full of water-friendly plantings.

For more information on the City of Gaithersburg's environmental programs please contact the Environmental Services Division at 301-258-6370 or e-mail [environment@gaitthersburgmd.gov](mailto:environment@gaitthersburgmd.gov).

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